



COVID-19 Visitation Guidance For Long-Term Care Facilities Updated and Effective February 19, 2021

The information contained in this COVID-19 Guidance supersedes previously issued guidance regarding visitation in nursing homes and assisted living residences in Rhode Island.

Each long-term care facility is encouraged have a publicly posted visitation policy informing families, visitors, and residents of their policy, including when visitation will be limited or restricted.

Summary

Every long-term care facility will be actively engaged in implementing a plan that permits in-person visitation in such a manner that resident health and safety is protected to the maximum extent possible.

- Facilities that have not had any positive COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days **may not restrict visitations** “without a reasonable clinical or safety cause” consistent with CMS regulations. COVID screening, resident and staff testing, hand hygiene, physical distancing and environmental cleaning should remain in effect, and visitation should be allowed if there are no new cases within the previous two weeks. “Failure to facilitate visitation, without adequate reason related to clinical necessity or resident safety, would constitute a potential violation...”
- If a facility identifies one new onset case (resident or staff) in the same building/structure, the facility should ensure that the case is isolated and case contacts are quarantined in accordance with existing guidance and protocols.
- Indoor visitation may continue for non-infected, asymptomatic residents and those not required to quarantine (when outdoor visits are not practicable) provided that:
 - Ventilation systems are operating and serviced properly;
 - Circulation of outdoor air is increased as much as possible;
 - Appropriate filtration and adequate relative humidity (40%-60%) are in place.
- If there are two or more cases in the same facility, the facility should contact RIDOH as soon as possible. RIDOH will work with the facility to determine if a visitation plan can safely be implemented.

Virtual Visitation

- While in-person visits must generally not be restricted, long-term care facilities should use alternative electronic methods for virtual communication between residents and visitors as much as possible. All long-term care facilities should have a process to allow for remote communications between a resident and a virtual visitor (e.g., video call applications on cell phones or tablets).

General In-Person Requirements

All of the following are required for in-person visitation:

- **Screening** of all who enter the facility for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., temperature checks, questions or observations about signs or symptoms) and denial of entry of those with signs or symptoms
- **Face covering** or mask ([covering mouth, nose, and chin](#))
 - Wear a mask that fits snugly but comfortably over your nose, mouth, and chin without any gaps.
 - **Great protection:** N-95, KN-95, or KF-94 mask
 - **Good protection:** Medical procedure (paper) mask that fits
 - **OK protection:** Cloth mask made of a tightly woven, breathable fabric that's at least two layers thick and fits
- **Physical distancing** at least six feet between persons
- Residents and visitors should not travel through any space designated as COVID-19 care space
- **High-touch surfaces** in visitation areas (e.g., tables) are **cleaned** after each visit
- Meet all Rhode Island quarantine requirements posted [here](#)
- Staff use of Personal Protective Equipment (**PPE**), as indicated

Additionally, all of the following are recommended for in-person visitation:

- **Frequent hand hygiene** (use of alcohol-based hand rub is preferred)
- **Two visitors** maximum per resident
- Visits scheduled **in advance**
- **Brief physical contact** (e.g., hand holding) may be permitted if desired by both the resident and their visitor. Both the resident and the visitor must use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol before and after contact; limit the duration of the close contact; embracing and hugging is allowed for brief periods of time as long as both individuals are wearing masks.

Indoor Visits

- Visits are restricted to the resident's room or other area(s) specifically designated for visits. If a resident's room is used for visitation, only one visitor per resident at a time is allowed in the resident's room during the visit.
- If a large common room is used simultaneously by more than one resident for visitation, *there should be approximately 150 square feet per person to support physical distancing and decrease the interactions between those who are present.*

Outdoor Visits

- Outdoor visits are encouraged, weather and logistics permitting.
- If a tent is utilized, the facility must ensure that it is flame retardant and there is no smoking or flames allowed in or near the tent. The tent should not be attached to the building and it should be a *minimum* of 10 feet from the building. Facilities need to maintain documentation that the tent meets NFPA 701 flame retardant standards. (This should be marked on the tent.) There must be signs showing the exits from the tent and stating that smoking is not allowed in or near the tent.

End-of-Life and Compassionate Care Visits

- Compassionate care visits should always be permitted in a facility. Compassionate care visits do not exclusively refer to end-of-life situations. Other types of compassionate care situations include:
 - A resident, previously living with family and recently being admitted to a nursing home, is struggling with the change in environment and lack of physical family support; and/or
 - A resident, who used to talk and interact with others, is experiencing emotional distress and is seldom speaking.

COVID-19 Testing

- RIDOH *encourages* COVID-19 testing of persons visiting long-term care residents. Long-term care facilities that wish to test visitors may utilize antigen point of care test kits or encourage visitors to use traditional PCR testing available at www.portal.ri.gov.
- Resident and staff testing is conducted in accordance with state regulations.

Vaccination

- Generally, full immunity from the vaccine develops about seven to 14 days after the final dose. While vaccination mitigates loss of life and greatly reduces the odds of getting very sick from COVID-19, further research is required to determine if a vaccinated person can continue to carry and spread the disease. Therefore, residents and visitors should continue to practice hand hygiene, social distancing, masking, and use PPE, as appropriate.